

Wycombe 0 Middlesbrough 0: by DENIS COMPTON

THIS was nearly one of the great upsets in the history of the F.A. Cup. Had justice prevailed, the fantastic little amateur Wycombe would have gone through to the fourth round at the first hurdle for a home tie against Sunderland.

They were faster on the ball and in the second-half, almost

outplayed the professionals.

Middlesbrough manager Jack Charlton said afterwards: "I've never been on the rack so much in my life. The relief after it was all over was almost unbearable. We found the sloping pitch impossible to play football on."

Yet Wycombe managed to do so—and how. They were all heroes. Their stamina was remarkable and their work-rate much higher than the Northern side.

One of the heroes, Terry Reardon, had to miss training on Thursday evening because he was working until midnight. A pipe-fitter, he also had to work yesterday morning. So did Tony Horseman, a machinist with a furniture company. Both played with tremendous zest for 90 minutes.

Middlesbrough failed miserably to overcome the notorious slope and adjust their play to its subtleties.

We all thought the referee blew the final whistle three minutes short of time, and when after the game, this was mentioned to Jacky Charlton he immediately replied: "Thank God for that."

It must have been 90 minutes of agonising tension for Jack sitting on the sideline, and seeing his team being pressurised by a superior side on the day for most of this match. I cannot recall one single dangerous shot from the Middlesbrough side to test goalkeeper John Maskell.

By LANCE MASTERS Wycombe 0, Middlesbrough 0

JACK CHARLTON'S Middlesbrough, joint leaders of the First Division get a second chance in the F.A. Cup with a replay on Tuesday after scraping a lucky and ill-deserved draw with Wycombe's remarkable team of amateurs.

Three gentlemen perched precariously on a gasometer, many more watching from a hospital overlooking the ground, and a capacity crowd of 12,000 witnessed the huge embarrassment of Middlesbrough wobbling from one crisis to the next.

It was an astonishing performance, full of fire and conviction, by the Rothmans Isthmian League champions, which poked fun at the much quoted assertion of their manager, Brian Lee, that his team had "no chance."

The notorious Loakes Park slope, which tilts the pitch like a ski run, cannot be used as an excuse by Middlesbrough for the litter of mistakes and lack of compelling rhythm that marked their inept challenge.

Although Middlesbrough looked almost a size larger than their Wycombe rivals, they rarely out-paced them and in their mood of anxiety frequently had their attacks intercepted by Wycombe players which seemed almost telepathic.

Middlesbrough contrived only a few discernible shots in the first

half—both off-target efforts by Foggon—and they were so much under siege in the second half that the chant from Wycombe loyalists was a mocking "easy, easy."

Chief among Middlesbrough's tormentors on the field were Perrin, a nimble mover in a crowded penalty area, and the slender, stooping figure of Horseman, a local favourite known to the faithful as "Bodger."

At 34, Horseman has seen better days, although one spectator sounded wistful when Horseman failed to reach an impossibly fast pass. "Then years ago, he would have got that," he announced.

Undignified

It was mostly undignified defence for Middlesbrough in the second period, with the burly Craggs only too pleased to sweep the ball into touch or even out of the ground. The giant Boam took almost everything in the air, but still Middlesbrough struggled to find composure.

Perrin, patrolling the top of the slope, swooped like a hawk to cross the ball and start a wild melee in which Middlesbrough became increasingly desperate until the worthy Craggs conceded a corner.

The closest Wycombe came to scoring was when Phillips launched himself like a torpedo to head a free-kick by Reardon into the side netting.

WYCOMBE.—Maskell, Birdseye, Hand, Mead, Phillips, Reardon, Perrin, Kennedy, Searle, Hollfield, Horseman. Sub.: Evans.

MIDDLESBROUGH.—Platt, Craggs, Spraggon, Souness, Boam, Madding, Brine, Hickton, Mills, Foggon, Strong. Sub.: Willey.

Referee.—A. Porter (Bolton).

TORMENTED

But the amateurs tormented the Northerners. Middlesbrough defenders Willy Maddren and Stuart Boam in particular were merely content to kick the ball anywhere to relieve the pressures.

In the second half, a tremendous header from Wycombe's Phillips, after a free kick from Perrins, flashed inches wide of a post with goalkeeper Jim Platt helpless. Then a beautiful movement down the left ended with a terrific shot from Tony Horseman missing the goal by a whisker.

WYCOMBE.—Maskell: Birdseye, Hand, Mead, Phillips, Reardon, Kennedy, Hollfield, Searle, Horseman, Perrin. Sub.: Evans.

MIDDLESBROUGH.—Platt: Craggs, Maddren, Boam, Spraggon, Brian, Souness, Armstrong, Hickton, Mills, Foggon. Sub.: Willey.

By Norman de Mesquita

Brian Lee, the Wycombe Wanderers' manager, spent all last week assuring all and sundry that his team had no chance of beating Middlesbrough, and, even after Saturday's goalless draw at Loakes Park, he refused to admit that Wycombe were unlucky not to win.

I think Mr Lee is being less than fair to his players, who showed far more skill than their first division opponents and resolutely refused to play to Middlesbrough's strengths. Middlesbrough are a big side, and, naturally, won everything in the air. But Wycombe played a succession of neat, triangular movements that constantly had the bigger and more cumbersome professionals stumbling and, had Perrin's shot, early in the second half, and Phillips's header, with just under 20 minutes to go, gone in instead of inches wide, the result would have fairly reflected Wycombe's undoubted superiority.

Wycombe's insistence on doing the cool and confident thing

worked against them at times when a greater sense of urgency might have allowed them more possession. There were occasions, particularly in the first half, when they were guilty of giving the ball away and they were lucky that Middlesbrough were not better able to take advantage of the possession they had.

Middlesbrough's success this season has of course been built on a basically defensive attitude, particularly away from home. On the three occasions I have seen them, though, they have been boring to watch, and I have yet to see them score a goal. On Saturday they rarely looked like breaking that duck, and the only uneasy moment for the home supporters came two minutes from the end when Willey was slow to take advantage of a dreadful mix-up in the Wycombe defence and Maskell, by far the less busy of the two goalkeepers, was able to scramble the ball away.

But this was an isolated moment of danger for the home side and

it was the professionals rather than the amateurs who hung on grimly for a replay. Twice they had the ball over the stand and out of the ground and chants of "easy" and "what a load of rubbish", from the home fans were an indictment perhaps of their attitude to the game.

Mr Lee still maintains that if Middlesbrough had played as well as they can, Wycombe would not still be interested in the FA Cup. But even he had to admit that, if there had been any luck going in the game and Wycombe had got it, they might well have won. He described his team as "winners on points". If there is any justice in football, they will get the knock-out win they deserve at Ayresome Park tomorrow night.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell: P. Birdseye, G. Hand, K. Mead, A. Phillips, T. Reardon, S. Perrin, H. Kennedy, K. Searle, M. Hollfield, A. Horseman (sub. D. Evans).

MIDDLESBROUGH: J. Platt: J. Craggs, F. Spraggon, G. Souness, S. Boam, W. Maddren, P. Brine, J. Hickton, B. Mills, A. Foggon (sub. A. Willey), D. Armstrong. Referee: A. Porter (Bolton).